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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 7, 2011**

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**RUSSIAN PILOT SENTENCED IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT TO
20 YEARS IN PRISON FOR CONSPIRING TO IMPORT MORE THAN
\$100 MILLION WORTH OF COCAINE INTO THE UNITED STATES**

*Second Defendant To Be Sentenced In Connection With Historic
Joint Undercover Operation Between The United States And
The Government of Liberia*

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that KONSTANTIN YAROSHENKO was sentenced today in Manhattan federal court to 20 years in prison for conspiring to import cocaine into the United States. He was found guilty in April 2011, after a three-week jury trial before U.S. District Judge JED S. RAKOFF. YAROSHENKO's sentence is the culmination of the historic, joint undercover operation, "Operation Relentless," between the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") and the Government of Liberia.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "Konstantin Yaroshenko agreed to play a vital role in a vast, international drug conspiracy that attempted to transform the country of Liberia into a transshipment hub for ton quantities of cocaine. But unbeknownst to his coconspirators, the same Liberian officials they attempted to bribe were working in lockstep with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration to take him and his co-conspirators down. Today's sentence is the latest manifestation of those historic efforts."

According to the trial evidence and other documents filed in the case:

YAROSHENKO, who is from Russia, was an aircraft pilot and aviation transport expert who transported thousand-kilogram quantities of cocaine throughout South America, Africa, and Europe. YAROSHENKO's co-defendant CHIGBO PETER UMEH, who is from Nigeria, was a broker who facilitated the shipment of multi-ton

quantities of cocaine from South America to West Africa, where it would then be transported to Europe or elsewhere within Africa.

YAROSHENKO and UMEH attempted to bribe high-level officials within the Liberian Government in order to protect shipments of cocaine and to use the country as a trans-shipment point for its drug distribution operations. In particular, UMEH met with the Director and Deputy Director of the Republic of Liberia National Security Agency ("RLNSA"), whom he knew were government officials. Both of whom were working jointly with the DEA in an undercover capacity. The Director of the RLNSA is also the son of the current President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

In a number of the meetings involving the Liberian officials, YAROSHENKO and UMEH also met with a confidential source working with the DEA (the "CS"), who purported to be a business partner and confidante of the Director of the RLNSA. In seeking to ensure safe passage of the cocaine shipments, they agreed to make payments in cash and cocaine to the Liberian officials and to the CS. The CS advised YAROSHENKO and UMEH that a portion of the cocaine paid to the CS would be transported from Liberia to Ghana, from where it would be imported into New York.

YAROSHENKO and UMEH participated in a series of face-to-face meetings and phone conversations with the cooperating Liberian officials and the CS in connection with at least three different shipments of cocaine that they were trying to transport through Liberia: a shipment of approximately 4,000 kilograms with a retail value of over \$100 million that was to be flown from Venezuela to Monrovia, Liberia; a shipment of approximately 1,500 kilograms, which was to be flown from Venezuela to Monrovia, Liberia, on an aircraft originating in Panama; and a shipment of approximately 500 kilograms of cocaine, which was to be transported by ship from Venezuela to a location off the coast of Liberia. They understood that once the cocaine was transported to Liberia, the portion of the shipment representing the payment to the CS, would be transported into Ghana. From there, it would be placed on a commercial flight destined for the United States.

During a meeting in Monrovia, UMEH stated that the 4,000 kilograms of cocaine that the conspirators intended to import into Liberia had been supplied and protected by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the "FARC"). The FARC is a U.S. designated foreign terrorist group dedicated to the violent overthrow of the democratically elected Government of Colombia.

On May 28, 2010, YAROSHENKO was arrested in Liberia. He was transferred by the Government of Liberia to the custody of the United States to face trafficking charges in the Southern District of New York.

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In addition to the prison term, Judge RAKOFF sentenced, YAROSHENKO, 42, to five years of supervised release and ordered him to pay a \$100 special assessment fee.

UMEH, NATHANIEL FRENCH, and KUDUFIA MAWUKO, were tried along with YAROSHENKO. UMEH was found guilty and sentenced to 30 years in prison. FRENCH and MAWUKO were acquitted.

Mr. BHARARA praised the work of the Special Operations Division of DEA, the DEA Lagos Country Office, the DEA Warsaw Country Office, the DEA Bogota Country Office, the DEA Rome Country Office, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs, and the U.S. State Department. He also thanked the U.S. Embassy in Liberia, the Republic of Liberia and its National Security Agency, and the Security Services of Ukraine for their efforts.

This prosecution is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys CHRISTOPHER LAVIGNE, RANDALL JACKSON, MICHAEL M. ROSENSAFT, and JENNA M. DABBS are in charge of the prosecution.

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